Kitchener, 21 July 2018
Pamela Fehr on behalf of Silver Lake Mennonite Camp; board@slmc.ca
**PRESS RELEASE**

The board of Silver Lake Mennonite Camp was deeply troubled to learn of Ruth-Ann Klassen Shantz's account of abuse as a staff person by someone in a position of power and authority at the camp. We are sick at the thought of her abuse and resulting trauma. Most board members are former staff or current parents of staff and campers; our response to Ruth-Ann's story is both personally visceral and organizational. We intend to act wisely and decisively for a safer future.

Ruth-Ann first shared her story with the board early in 2018. Since her initial disclosure to the camp, we have been in conversation with Ruth-Ann about her experience and her deeply felt desire for us to acknowledge that experience and to take positive steps.

After discussion with Ruth-Ann, Silver Lake issued a trespass notice to Lawrence Pentelow, banning him from all camp property and all future camp events.

Silver Lake's policies and procedures related to workplace practices and issues of harassment and sexual violence are much more robust today than they were in the 1980s when Ruth-Ann was a staff member. Nevertheless, after hearing Ruth-Ann's account, the board began a review of all related policies and procedures, seeking counsel and input to ensure they meet best practices and are broadly known and understood by staff. Ruth-Ann has volunteered to provide us with advice as we formulate these tools.

In the wake of learning Ruth-Ann's story and the long-overdue sensitization to issues of sexual violence in our community and society at large, the camp also saw an opportunity to develop a new training curriculum not only for our own staff, but also available to the broader camping community. The result, still in its final stages of development and testing, promises to be a powerful tool. We have engaged external experts in the curricular development process, and our efforts have been supported by Mennonite Church Eastern Canada, for which we are grateful. This effort has been inspired by Ruth-Ann's story. We hope that potentially hundreds of people will be better educated, more aware, and more empowered to act to protect their own boundaries and support those of others as a result of Ruth-Ann's courage in coming forward.

Ruth-Ann's commitment to Silver Lake has been expressed in many ways for which we are so grateful. She was a creative staff person and trainer of leaders while at Silver Lake. She has been a volunteer, and a board chairperson during a challenging time. She has supported her own children in their lives as campers and Silver Lake staff. And from our point of view, she has now courageously come forward with her story so that we can make sure we are better, that our campers and staff are safer, and that our future is brighter.

The board remains fully committed to the safety of all its community members, and welcomes your prayers at this difficult time. We are driven by a vision of positive, open Christian community, and saddened at its failures for Ruth-Ann. If you have comments, concerns or questions, please connect directly with Pamela Fehr, Board Chair.